

A Boy's Recollections

OF THE

Red Shirt Campaign

Of 1876

In South Carolina

Paper Read Before the Kosmos Club
of Columbia, S. C.

BY

W. W. BALL

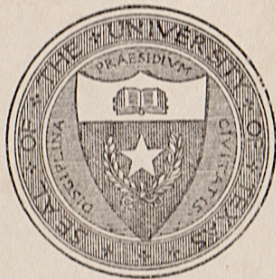
January 21, 1911

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PAID TO VNU

Extract From the Minutes

Kosmos Club, January 21, 1911.

"The paper of the evening was by Mr. W. W. Ball, and was entitled 'A Boy's Recollections of the Red Shirt Campaign' (of 1876). It was voted by all present to be one of the best ever read before the Club. The reading of the paper was followed by the usual discussion, after which it was resolved, on motion of Professor Snowden, that Mr. Ball be requested to put his paper into shape for publication by the Club." * * *

RED SHIRT CAMPAIGN OF 1876

My excuse for this rambling sketch is that I have not had time to prepare a paper requiring research. I must also apologize for its very personal character, though I believe that the Club will perceive that from its nature it could scarcely be other than personal. I purpose in the paper to describe, in some faint way, the picturesque side of one of the notable episodes in the history of the State, in the hope that something may be contributed to an understanding of it.

Among my earliest recollections was an afternoon in the year 1873 or 1874, when, as night was coming on, my father (B. W. Ball), did not come home at the usual time—sundown—and my mother, then a woman of 25 or 26, was in dread lest he had been arrested and flung in jail at the village of Laurens, a mile and a half distant, by the "Radicals." I shared in the dread. My father was a lawyer, but we were living on my maternal grandmother's plantation, which lay just north of the village, and my father was planting it with my grandmother, practicing his profession in the village at the same time.

In October, 1870, on the morning following the general election, "the Riot" (people of Laurens to this day speak of it as "the Riot") had occurred. That affair would make a long story in itself. It must suffice here to say that it began on the court house square with the firing of a pistol, probably by design, possibly by accident. The negroes fled to the armory of the negro militia company, an old frame building called "Tinpote Alley," on the south side of the square. White men attacked the building, a negro showed his head on a balcony, a bullet fired from the square dropped him to the ground below. The hundreds of negroes deserted the building in panic and one or two were shot down in the village as they ran. Volney Powell, a handsome young carpetbagger from Ohio, who had been elected Probate Judge the day before, and Bill Riley, a negro politician, set out for Newberry in the direction taken by a company of

United States regulars, who had marched away at 4 o'clock in the morning in the belief that danger of an outbreak had passed. Their object was to bring the soldiers back to Laurens. Three miles from the village they were overtaken and killed. Meanwhile, the riot in the village had been turned into a negro chase, which covered practically the whole county, and lasted throughout the day and night, the first shot having been fired about 11 o'clock in the morning. At the time, my father was engaged in a trial in the court house. When the trouble began he rushed out and took command of the white men, forming them into some sort of military order. His efforts were to restore the peace, and Laurens men have said since his death that the slaughter would have been much greater but for his conduct. One of the men who behaved with great gallantry that day was William Beard, an uncle by marriage of one of our members, Mr. Hoyt. While the negroes were in "Tinpot" with their guns, and before they stampeded, Beard ran forward with an axe and was battering down the door of the armory when the negroes stampeded. He was without protection if the negroes had chosen to fire from the windows. He was a man of desperate courage.

On the night of the riot 2,000 or more men congregated in Laurens, coming from Union, Abbeville, Spartanburg, Newberry, Greenville and all the nearby counties, as well as from the length and breadth of Laurens. By every highway approaching the village they could be heard riding and yelling all the night long. Within five minutes after the flight from the armory, not a negro or white Radical was to be seen anywhere, and it was two or three days before they began to steal out of the woods and swamps. Besides the one white man, eleven or twelve negroes were killed during the day and night at widely separated places in the county. Wade Perrin, a negro who had been elected to the Legislature the day before, was killed beyond the county line, in Newberry, I think.

I mention this affair in some detail (of course I do not remember it, as I was under two years old), because from that time the negroes in Laurens behaved themselves with

seemliness, although their party continued in control until 1876. The cause of the riot was the intolerable political condition. Negroes, organized in militia and egged on by incendiary speakers, white and black, and with the presence of a Federal garrison to embolden them, had made life unendurable to the whites. Whether the firing of the pistol that started the fighting was by design or not, I do not know, but probably it was by design—some desperate white men having resolved to precipitate the inevitable conflict. None of the leading white men were privy to this design, if it existed. Anyway, the effect was salutary and lasting; in fact, it is still lasting.

A few days later fifteen or twenty arrests of old men and youths, non-combatants most of them, were made by the Federal authorities, and the prisoners were brought to Columbia. One of them was the late Major John A. Leland, president of a girls' college in Laurens, who has told of the affair in a little book, "A Voice From South Carolina." The active men—my father among them—disappeared and avoided arrest, visiting their friends in remote rural districts and going afishing. A few who were suspected of complicity in one or another of the homicides were driven from the State and compelled to absent themselves for several years.

In some of these years my father was writing the editorial articles for the *Laurensville Herald*, and they were said to be of no very temperate character. The editorial policy was to denounce and ridicule the "Radicals" (no white person used the word "Republican" in those days), and so to hold the white men together and prevent the weak-kneed from going over to the enemy.

In 1875, when we had moved to the village, I went to the postoffice for the mail late one afternoon, and while at the "delivery" window I saw leaning against a tree not far away a black frock-coated, saturnine looking old fellow. Suddenly it dawned on me that he was Jake Collins (I use a fictitious name) and I scudded home as though a thousand devils were behind me. I was then six years old, and this man, the notorious white Radical leader of the county, was

identical with my notion of the persons who fell victims to the prowess of "Jack the Giant Killer," and I was not a "Jack the Giant Killer."

That same summer the man was assassinated at the dawn of a morning as he was driving towards Newberry in a buggy. Whether the motive of the assassination was political or not (which may well be doubted), every white woman and child and every white man in Laurens, except his few white friends and some relatives, were glad when they heard that Collins was dead. There were those who said that his removal made the Democratic victory of the next year possible in Laurens, but that is not true. Collins was not regarded a brave or a desperate man, and he had not been on the firing line in the war. He had cunning in abundance, and was dangerous only when not vigorously opposed. He would have counted for nothing against the storm that swept the Radicals out of existence the next year. Before the war he traded in negroes, so slavery trained a tormentor for the sons and daughters of the slaveholders.

In 1876 Laurens village, or perhaps it had not then shed the name of "Laurensville," had a population of about 800, of whom 300 were negroes. By the State census of 1875 the negro voting majority in the county was about 600, and the white vote was probably around 2,000. The one railroad had been abandoned after the war and restored during that year. In the late fall trains from Newberry were stopping at a point about four miles east of the village.

In December, 1875, the State Central Committee of the Democratic party met and arranged for the reorganization of the party in the State by counties. My father was appointed to reorganize Laurens County. In the fall of 1875 he had purchased a large and handsome brick residence in the incorporate limits of the town but situated three-quarters of a mile from the public square, and surrounded by native forest, so that it was completely isolated in the centre of a tract of more than a hundred acres, which included a small farm under cultivation. The place had been improved by the late Col. John D. Williams, one of the wealthy slaveholders of the up-country, and among the

outhouses was the best barn in the county, with stalls for perhaps twenty horses.

The first impression of the year 1876 that remains with me is that we began to have more company than usual at our house. It had always been the habit of my father to bring home his country friends and clients to spend the night occasionally, but as spring came there were one or two farmers at the house two or three times a week. These, as I now know, were influential men in their neighborhoods, and, almost without exception, middle-aged and Confederate veterans. Politics was talked constantly, but of what was said I remember nothing. Then frequently and more frequently—sometimes more than once in the same week—my father would go out into the country to address Democratic clubs. I recall dimly going to one place with him—Scuffletown—where he and others spoke to 75 or 100, perhaps 200 men, in a country store. I recollect nothing of the early days of the campaign, and nothing of the May State Convention, but when the August Convention was held that nominated General Hampton, events began to stamp themselves on my mind. Perhaps my father's nomination for Circuit Solicitor excited my immediate interest in the campaign, for it then had, more than ever, a personal meaning to me and my mother, grandmother and three aunts who lived at our house. It is of some significance to recall now that this nomination was obtained over three influential lawyers in the judicial convention held in Columbia at the same time that the State Convention was held, because it shows that the nominations were not regarded as empty honors, and that the Democrats at that early stage were not only resolved, but expecting to win. About the same time, perhaps a few days before the State Convention, the County Convention named candidates for the legislative and other offices, and the contests for the nominations were somewhat heated. All of the nominees, I think, were Confederate veterans.

From the time of the State Convention the hard riding began in Laurens. Practically every man went armed. Pistol carrying was a necessity in those days, and it should

be observed that the habit was forced upon the people in the period of Reconstruction. When insolent negroes were marching the streets armed, and white scalawags were inflaming them with incendiary harangues, common prudence required that even the law-abiding and sober white men be prepared at all times to defend themselves and their families. These years doubtless made popular the evil custom of carrying pistols, which so many of the people have not abandoned, and which is still a prolific source of crime.

Exactly when the red shirt made its appearance in Laurens I do not know, but from August until after the election in November companies and squadrons of men were every two or three days coming into the village. Every man and youth, it seems to me now, must have been on horseback, galloping day and night. Nearly every night our house was more or less crowded with visitors from all parts of the county. A Red Shirt Club from Cross Hill Township where my father was born and reared, was named in his honor, and a large proportion of its members, some of them prominent and others poor men, were connected with him by blood or marriage. Squadrons of these men at any hour of the day and night were in the habit of riding to the house, stabling their horses and mules and spending the night.

Meantime the fear was not absent, at least from the women, that there would be trouble with the "Rads," and the news of a conflict would have startled, without surprising, anyone. One day about noon, when I was playing in the backyard with a small cousin, and my mother and her sisters were in the kitchen, the "rebel yell" rang out in the woods near our front gate. From the noise it seemed to me that it came from a thousand throats, and I was sure that at last the "Rads" were upon us and that massacre was imminent. I ran frightened to the house and found my mother and the family terrified too, but, almost before the echo of the yell had died, it broke into "Three cheers for Mrs. Ball and the baby!", (my sister was about eight or nine months old) and we were all happy again. The yell had come from a party of about fifteen of the Cross Hill red shirts who had come over to the house for dinner.

I relate these incidents with the object of impressing the plan of campaign. The county was perfectly organized. The essence of the plan was to make and maintain until the election should pass a continuing demonstration that would over-awe the Radicals without at any time doing them actual violence, unless actually necessary. So there was the everlasting thud of horses' hoofs and wild yelling on all the highways and in every corner of the county. The echoes seemed never to die, and they were punctuated, too, with pistol shots, at times, fired in the empty air.

Except for the shadow of interference by Federal bayonets, the winning of a victory, even in a county with a negro majority, would have presented no difficulties. General Hampton knew, and all his trusted leaders knew, that the problem was to hold up to the gaze and din into the ears of the negroes the picture and sound and menace of war against them, without committing any overt acts of war. Whenever the news would come of riot and bloodshed in another part of the State my father and his lieutenants talked gravely of the situation, and yet when the Radicals held meetings in Laurens the red shirts were there and there by orders, singing to the tune of "John Brown's Body," as they galloped into the very presence of the Radical speakers, "We'll hang Dan Chamberlain to a sour apple tree as we go marching home." Often they substituted the names of other prominent Radicals who were on hand to speak. To the guying and badgering of the Radical speakers, there was no limit, and yet there was always restraint. Nobody was to be hurt and everybody was to be able to say that the peace had not been broken.

In Laurens County no rioting occurred during the campaign. Some negroes were killed, but I do not know that there was a single homicide directly political in its origin. There were scores of rowdy and desperate young men, and the unremitting task of the older men was to prevent these from doing crimes that would provide a pretext for the declaration of martial law. In the village were at least six or eight barrooms, open day and night, cotton was bringing 15 or 20 cents a pound, and the people had not learned to

save. Laurens County had two kinds of white ruffians—the ruffians, or desperadoes mark, being the exceptions—of whom the L. brothers, B. and T., were examples of one kind. They were men of good extraction, their parents having been well-to-do slaveholders, and they were such characters as are described in stories of the Far West. B. L., when drinking, was dangerous to whites as well as to blacks. He was absolutely fearless and desperate, and scarcely burdened with a sense of responsibility, though a man of intelligence. I do not know that any homicide was ever traced to either brother, but most homicides were not traced in those times, and they were usually on hand where there was trouble, and were not unready to begin it anywhere. Yet men of their class were not without some fine instincts, and I do not think that they would have shot a negro in cold blood. One afternoon B. L. rode his horse up a flight of stairs to the second story of a brick building into the office of the *Laurensville Herald*, a deed typical of the Western cowboy. One of the brothers afterwards went to the Far West—Montana or one of the Dakotas—and “died with his boots on” as a sheriff or deputy sheriff.

There was another kind of ruffian of whom I recall a specimen. He was of humble origin, a brutal fellow, who, in the course of two years or less time, shot and killed six or seven negroes with little or no provocation. He would meet a negro in the road and shoot him without apparent cause. None of these murders was political. This man finally fled the State, remained in seclusion five or six years and shortly afterwards died. He was never tried for his crimes. He had abundant courage of a low order, and instinctive shrewdness enough not to engage often with white antagonists. The L. boys and others of their description were desperadoes, but quite as fine in their way as the outlaws of romance.

Returning to the campaign, there were at our house one night twenty-three young countrymen, Red Shirts, and twenty of them were drunk. They did not get the whiskey at the house. My father was careful that only the staid and sober men had access to the decanter at home, but they had

loaded up in the village. One poor devil literally had to be carried from the supper table. All night long these young fellows sang and shouted in the upper floors of the house. I mention the incident to show that in such times respectable people were not punctilious about their guests, and these lads, every one of them, were welcome drunk or sober.

So the galloping and riding and shooting went on. A brass band was organized for the campaign, and it is said to have learned to play with some success a single tune—possibly with less success, three or four. It went to the meetings everywhere in the county, and was quite as useful in interrupting the speeches of Radicals at the right time as in inspiring Democratic enthusiasm. Some of its members were couriers as well as musicians, for the courier corps was a most important agency of the campaign. The summoning of Red Shirts over an area of 700 square miles and sometimes from neighboring counties, when there were no telephones or telegraph lines, called for lads not strangers to the saddle.

Finally the day of the “Hampton meeting” approached. By this time I had acquired a red shirt which my grandmother made for me, and of which I was immensely proud, save that the material of it was red calico instead of the regulation red flannel. The night before the meeting my grandmother carried me and a cousin to a friend’s house on the other side of the village to see the campaign cavalcade come in from Union court house. The speakers and their escort were to arrive in the afternoon, but, stopping at various points on the way to address small crowds of Democrats, they did not arrive until far in the night, so we did not see them. We did see, though, the Greenville City company, which had ridden thirty-eight miles for the meeting. I remember that they were the first company of even semi-military men that I had ever seen, except “Yankees,” in fact, until then I rather supposed the words “Yankee” and “soldier” synonymous. The company was commanded by Capt. V. E. (Bunch) McBee, later a prominent railroad man, and Dr. W. L. Mauldin, afterwards Lieutenant-Governor, and now Senator from Greenville County, was one of its officers.

General Hampton and the campaign party were met four miles from Laurens by the local Red Shirts and escorted into the village.

The sun rose next morning on such a day in the village of Laurens as was never known before and has not been seen since. Long before daylight every road leading into the town was crowded with buggies, wagons and men on horseback. Every vehicle and every horse and mule in the county, and hundreds in the adjoining counties must have been called into service. Everybody was cheering and shouting. I was in a carriage with some of the women of my family, having, much to my sorrow, been refused the privilege, on account of my youth, of riding in the Red Shirt procession.

About 10 o'clock the procession formed on the public square and streets radiating from it. I had not dreamed, until then, that there were so many men in the world or half so many horses and mules. Company after company, some of them stretching hundreds of yards, swept across the square, every man yelling and cheering. Most of the companies—I suppose there must have been twenty of them—were uniformed in red shirts, but the shirts were not all alike. The cloth was red flannel, and in many instances it was elaborately trimmed with blue, and sometimes with yellow. Here and there was a marshal with plumed hat and clanking sword, dashing from place to place and evidently feeling his importance immensely. In one or two cases companies did not wear the red shirts, and I remember particularly seeing a company approaching a quarter of a mile down the street which seemed to be wearing white. When they came nearer it was revealed that they had improvised a uniform by shucking their coats and vests and coming in their shirt sleeves.

At least one other band than the Laurens organization that could play a single tune had been imported for the occasion, and the martial music was abundant. After an hour the procession moved towards a forest on the southern side of the town, where the meeting was to be held. It was fully a mile in length, and the men rode in close order. The

October day was dry, and the clouds of dust were thick to suffocation, but the procession was a glorious spectacle; at any rate, no military parade that I have seen since was so splendidly impressive to me, and I think I have seen as many as 30,000 soldiers at once passing under review. No 30,000 soldiers ever cheered more vociferously or incessantly. In many companies there were a few red shirted negroes, and they were the objects of a great deal of interest. It was estimated at the time that 2,300 mounted men were in line, but this was perhaps a slight exaggeration, as there were not more than that number of white voters in the county. However, hundreds of lads not of age wore red shirts and rode, and there were some hundreds of men, too, from other counties. The assemblage at the meeting was estimated at 5,000 and included some hundreds of women.

The speaker's stand was decorated lavishly with flowers and there were rough slab seats in front of it. My father, as county chairman, presided and introduced the speakers, and he took me on the stand with him, to my boundless delight. Immediately in front of the stand some of the seats had been set apart for negroes.

I remember General Hampton's speaking, but my attention was not attracted by his calm and easy manner of address. It did not interest a small boy. In fact, the only speech that I recall was that of Col. D. Wyatt Aiken, the candidate for Congress, who told numerous anecdotes, one of which was about Republican puppies that were blind and Democratic puppies which "had their eyes open." I also remember that Col. W. D. Simpson, a Laurens man, the candidate for Lieutenant-Governor and the most eloquent orator of the party, spoke and that at times his voice broke, evidently from over-straining at the previous meetings.

The speaking, though, was a minor incident of the day, much as to hear it was the ostensible object of the gathering. The demonstration of the man on horseback, designed to impress the negro mind, was the really important feature. General Hampton, Colonel Aiken and others appealed to the negro voters, but I doubt if the appeals were effective.

The Red Shirts and the terrible "rebel yells" were the arguments that the Radicals understood.

Mr. John S. Reynolds, in his "Reconstruction in South Carolina," tells how the cry "Hurrah for Hampton" resounded through South Carolina. To my ears the cry of "Hurrah" has ever seemed unnatural and jarring when used with any other name than "Hampton" since those days.

At our breakfast table next morning Capt. "Bunch" McBee related that when he rode to the house at midnight with half a dozen other guests of ours, he called "Madison Allen," a negro man, an ex-slave of the family, to put their horses in the stalls. Now "Mad" was the owner of a mule named "Mike," distinguished for its lively heels. "Mad," Captain McBee said, "was reluctant to enter the stable. 'Why don't you go on and put up these horses?' said McBee. 'Boss, I'se scared of that mule of mine,' replied Madison, 'he'll kick.'"

"Whoever heard of a mule that would kick the nigger that owns him? Go on and put up the horses," said McBee.

"Mad still hesitated.

"Go on in with the horses, you black rascal!" said McBee, growing impatient, 'you know the mule won't kick his master.'

"Lordy, boss," responded Mad, 'you don't know nothin' about dat mule, dat mule would kick anybody—dat mule would kick Hampton.'

The story went the rounds of the campaign thereafter, and it aptly illustrated the idolatrous regard in which General Hampton had come to be held. It was the irony of fate that within less than two years another irreverent mule's heels cost General Hampton a leg and almost his life.

There was no relaxation of enthusiasm in Laurens after the great Hampton day. The Red Shirts incessantly rode in small and large bodies. Governor Chamberlain came to Laurens and spoke, and the Red Shirts made his day warm for him, but they did not hurt him. I have heard my father say, by the way, that whatever might be said to Chamberlain's discredit, cowardice was not his weakness. He was always cool and courageous under trying circumstances.

In respect to the quality of courage, there was a young South Carolinian named McGill Fleming, the incumbent Solicitor of the Seventh Circuit and the candidate for re-election against my father. He was addicted to whiskey and other vices that had dragged him low, but he was a thoroughbred and a man of fine talent. On account of my father's candidacy the feeling against him was especially intense in Laurens. One night during the campaign when Fleming was at a hotel in Laurens, a gang of a dozen or more Red Shirts, country boys, surrounded him and denounced him, sang ribald songs in his face and insulted him in every way they could devise. Fleming, so I heard at the time from a cousin of ours, himself a rather reckless and dangerous man, who saw the affair, cursed his persecutors and challenged them to fight him—one at a time. It was said that his courage saved him, though the Red Shirts probably knew better than to hurt him. It would have been imprudent. Degraded as the brilliant young scalawag was, his breeding asserted itself and he could not be daunted. Of course, this sort of conduct from the young Red Shirts was without the approbation and contrary to the orders of my father and others in charge of the campaign, but it could not altogether be prevented. The wonder is that the directors of the campaign succeeded in restraining the boys at all.

Although diligent and persevering efforts were made to convert negroes to the Hampton standard, they met with indifferent success. The few dozen or hundred that voted the Democratic ticket in Laurens were, as a rule, trifling, lazy, and careless fellows, who lived by tips from their white friends rather than by labor. With rare exceptions, the better as well as the more intelligent negroes remained steadfast Republicans. Many of them refrained from voting, but they did not become Democrats. The persuasive method was not effective with them.

I do not think that in the election of 1876 frauds were numerous in Laurens, but undoubtedly there was intimidation. I personally heard of but one case of bribery. A gang of half a dozen negroes were engaged in boring a well at our house when election day approached. On the day preceding

my mother offered each and all of them who would report at the house before 7 o'clock, the hour of opening the polls, and remain until after the polls closed, without doing any work, unless they wished, \$5.00 in gold. The virtue of all the members of the gang was impregnable except that of one Gil Garlington, and the money alone did not corrupt him. "If," said Gil, after pondering the offer, "the missus will give me, besides the \$5.00, all the sweet 'tater custards I can eat tomorrow, I'll come." The amendment was accepted. Gil was faithful to his bargain, got the gold piece and the custards. While I have never been disposed to criticize the ethical quality of my mother's assault on the purity of a South Carolina election, I have entertained some doubts of the wisdom of the investment. I fancy that Gil sold his abstention from political activity in 1876 at a higher price than any other Radical in the county received.

Numbers of negroes were told that if they voted the Radical ticket they would need other homes and employment, but this, I think, had little effect upon them. The American negro takes no thought of the morrow, and his faith that pasturage will last is childlike and unshakable. The negroes, thousands of them, did not vote, and there was a reason. The Red Shirt riders was the reason—not anxiety as to the wherewithal they should be fed and clothed. True, the endeavor of the whites to persuade and convince the negroes of the wisdom of voting the Democratic ticket was diligent and persevering, but it was unavailing to an extent that materially affected results.

On the night before election day hundreds of negroes were assembled by their leaders in the court room of the county court house and there they were kept throughout the night. The next morning early they were marched down stairs to the polling place, which was at a window of one of the lower floor court house offices. The voter approached the window from the court house square and deposited his ballot in the box placed on the low window sill. The negroes surrounded, or attempted to surround, the polling place, and there was a great crowd of them. There were also many white men, and a fair sprinkling of them had Winchester

repeating rifles in their hands, while others had them conveniently placed in stores nearby. On a hill 500 yards away, and not in sight, a company of United States regulars were in camp. They had been sent to Laurens, as they were sent to other towns where the contest was expected to be close. The presence of these soldiers was, of course, the grave factor in the problem to the Democrats. To avoid a collision with them and at the same time to carry the election, presented a nice puzzle for solution. As events indicated, it is likely that the officers in command of the troops were not without a correct understanding of a situation delicate to them as well as to the Democrats. At any rate, their behavior was eminently discreet.

In the early hours as the negroes crowded about the polling place the white men jeered and nagged them. In a little while two stalwart and well armed young farmers, of no especial reputation as peacekeepers (though both are now serious-minded and deeply religious men, and have been for years), became engaged in a lively fight. There were loud words and drawn weapons, and friends took sides, so that a bloody affray seemed imminent. The fight was a ruse. The two men were sworn friends, and are to this day. It was, in a later day slang, a "frame-up" designed to create a diversion, and it served its purpose. The neighborhood became uninviting to some of the negroes. By the time peace had been restored a squad of about twenty-five mounted Red Shirts galloped yelling onto the square, coming from some remote part of the county. As they rode they fired pistols in the air—always in the air—and in a few minutes they were gone, riding madly for some other voting precinct. They did no one the slightest injury. With all their wild cheering they were bent on peace. Fifteen minutes or half an hour later another company from another direction rode into the village in a sweeping gallop, firing their pistols in the same way, and in a few minutes they, too, were gone, with a clatter of hoofs and bursts of "Hurrah for Hampton!" These parties continued to arrive at intervals during the day, and in perhaps two hours the Radical party had dispersed and scarcely one of its colored members was to be seen. That

was the simple process by which the election was carried in Laurens County, and it cost no lives and no blood.

There were deputy United States marshals in Laurens too, and early in the morning two or three of them appeared at the polling place. They were quietly buttonholed by a few Democrats who, with the necessary though quiet emphasis, told them that they must leave the court house square and not be visible again that day. They obeyed. One of their interviewers was, I have been told, the "B. L." whom I have heretofore mentioned, and others were men of his type. The talk with these marshals was a business talk, and contained not the slightest ingredient of bluff. Had one of the officers been willing to sacrifice his life the course of events might have been changed.

There was not the slightest purpose on the part of the Democrats to do any man bodily harm; that was what they were trying to avoid, and the only danger was that some reckless youth or half drunken man would disobey orders. That would have seriously upset plans. Yet in certain emergencies and contingencies real fighting was contemplated as a last resort. A brother of my mother, who was barely of age in 1876, told me recently that early on the morning of the election my father called him aside and told him privately that the Federal soldiers in town were not to be disturbed, they were to be left severely alone—"unless they interfered. If they come over here from their barracks and hurt any of our people," said the county chairman to his young brother-in-law, "we are going to kill them." That desperate resolution, I have no doubt, had been maturely considered and arrived at by the leaders, and I suppose that similar procedure had been agreed upon everywhere in the State. It was doubtless part of the general plan. The soldiers occupied themselves with their own devices throughout the day and came no nearer to the polling place. I have no doubt, though I do not know it, that the method of fighting them had been planned with military precision and that a sufficient number of tried men had been entrusted with the execution of the project, if occasion arose, to overwhelm and slaughter practically the whole company. I repeat that my

impression is that this was to be the resort everywhere in the State if the necessity for it appeared, but it is to be borne always in mind that the plans were so made that only prudent, cautious and dependable men of experience were informed of it. The young man who told me of my father's conversation would not have been taken into the latter's confidence except that he was a member of his family. The young bloods of the land would have put the fat in the fire.

The Democrats carried Laurens County by more than 1,100 majority, and it will be remembered that it was the refusal of the State Board of Canvassers to issue certificates of election to the Democratic candidates for the House of Representatives from Laurens and Edgefield that caused the dual Houses, under rival speakers, General W. H. Wallace and E. W. M. Mackey, and the dual government lasting in Columbia until President Hayes withdrew the troops from the State House in April, 1877.

For two or three days, perhaps longer, reports of the results of the election were conflicting and the tension was great, but at last it seemed certain that the Democrats had won—the contest in Columbia not then being foreseen—and naturally there was wild rejoicing. Anvils were loaded with powder and fired, and there was a great torch-light procession, in which hundreds of Red Shirts participated. About 8 o'clock on the evening that the news of the victory was confirmed, we heard from our house a band playing and cheering in Main street, and a little later we knew that the townspeople were serenading Colonel Simpson, who had been elected Lieutenant-Governor. His house was about half a mile distant from ours, and a family consultation was immediately held as to ways and means of entertaining the boys if they should come to serenade my father. It happened that the larder was stocked with eggs that had been brought by a member of the family from the mountains in Greenville County where she had been spending a part of the summer, so an egg-nog was determined upon. In a few minutes the crowd was heard moving towards our house, and such an egg-beating as then took place was probably never equalled in the county. My father was, of course,

called on for a speech, and he was compelled to continue speaking, messages being slyly sent to him, until the nog was ready, lest the crowd disperse prematurely. I distinctly recall that seven dozen eggs—less three—went into the nog, including a special nog for one young man who was unwilling to have whiskey in his, but would take a glass flavored with vanilla. Presumably that young man was the original Laurens prohibitionist. The whiskey dispensaries have been banished from the county by Democratic votes in recent years.

Having tried to draw a picture, not entirely colorless, of this stirring period in the State's history, there are some conclusions, I think, that follow from it if the picture is true. I do not believe that General Hampton understood the nature of the campaign which he successfully led and which no other living man could have led to victory. General Hampton was a sincere man, and was convinced that the negroes could be persuaded to vote for him. His idea was that conciliatory approaches could restore the old-time feeling between former slave and master, and I suspect that he believed throughout his life that the negro largely contributed to the election of his ticket. As I have already intimated, the main scheme of the campaign was a huge bluff. The negroes were to be impressed by a terrific display of force, and yet no such force was to be exerted as would furnish the Grant administration with pretext to employ coercive measures. As I have also intimated, the bluffing would have ceased in a last dire emergency, and the white people would have fought, had they been driven to it, rather than yield. There was no other man in the State except Wade Hampton, in whose courage, judgment and disinterestedness the people had entire confidence. Goaded to madness as they had been, they could have been restrained from the folly of violence by no other leader. They obeyed him because the feeling for him was a fervent and yet somewhat far off adoration. General Hampton was never so close to the masses of the people as were some of his lieutenants, General Butler, for example, and yet, for that very reason, his hold on them in a time of extreme stress was the

stronger. Consequently, in after years when the need for a man of General Hampton's unrivalled qualities was not felt, his services were for the moment, with a fickleness characteristic of a people whose passions are easily aroused, rejected. My father often expressed to me the opinion that General Hampton's military prowess and the inflexible firmness of his character were so well known throughout the country that when he said that he would be Governor, at the time Chamberlain was disputing his election, President Grant, President Hayes and their advisers knew that to resist was to precipitate war, and that the declaration of no other South Carolinian would have so impressed them.

The white Democrats of South Carolina in 1876 were composed of two classes—Confederate veterans and the generation of young men who were born too late to serve in the War Between the States. The veterans were in the prime of life and vigor. A man who was 25 in 1861 was 41 in 1876. These men were probably the most experienced and effective body of veteran soldiers in the world. They had known war in its every phase and aspect. They had learned in its hard school how to obey orders, and they were familiar with all the ways of campaigning. They were resourceful, alert and self-contained, capable of handling, under direction of their old officers, the most delicate situations not only with consummate courage, but with consummate prudence. They could lead charges when it was wise to charge, and they could lie still and wait when to wait was the word.

Of the young men, on the other hand, there was scarcely one in whose breast did not lurk a vague feeling that the fates had cheated him out of his own, in that he had not had the opportunity to be a soldier, and a condition of affairs that had many points in common with a state of war was an extreme stimulus to their patriotism and enthusiasm. The chance even in some small way to prove their mettle to their fathers and brothers was not to be lost, so they were easily mustered and organized for the peculiar and extraordinary political campaign required to redeem the commonwealth. In the rarest instances was any act of reckless-

ness or violence done by an old soldier, and, but for these old soldiers, the youths would have been uncontrollable.

General Hampton's lieutenants were, almost without exception, ex-officers of the Confederate armies, and they were educated men of the highest order of intelligence. They were in the closest sympathy and association with the veterans of their former commands, and no other group of men could have managed the kind of campaign that the times demanded—the sustained demonstration of force for six months with the steady refraining from actual violence. When one thinks of the incomparable superiority in morale of the white men of 1876 over the poor negroes and few degraded whites who flocked with them, the fight that they made seems child's play, but when it is remembered that it was won in the face of Federal bayonets under the orders of a government that crushed the South only eleven years before, it takes on another and quite different character.

As I have said, there were in Laurens and elsewhere in the State some exhibitions of ruffianism and some murders done in 1876, but these were seldom directly connected with politics. At the same time they had a marked influence, and the occasional ugly proof that white men could shoot straight and would shoot quickly, contributed to the demoralizing of the negro party. While crimes are not to be extenuated, it is none the less a fact that in some measure we were beneficiaries of those done in a period that was akin to a state of war.

Notwithstanding this, nothing could be more unfair to South Carolina than the placing of exaggerated stress on frauds and intimidation done by the white people. Indeed, I doubt if the frauds in Laurens County or in most of the counties were considerable. The whites merely took advantage of the fact that the negroes could be frightened by noise and display, and little more than such demonstrations were required to insure success. The unfairness of exaggerating the frauds and intimidation lies in that these methods were initiated by the Republicans. The Republicans introduced the tissue ballot. In the southern counties where the negroes were in the overwhelming majority,

the ballot boxes were stuffed by Republican voters, and frauds in the counting were numerous. Granting that the Democrats were none too scrupulous in their observance of the proprieties and that they did not offer to the world an impressive picture of high-minded conduct in the election of 1876, it must not be forgotten that their adherence to virtuous methods would have been equivalent to unconditional surrender. Fraud and intimidation (the latter in localities where the whites were few and the negroes were emboldened by the presence of the military) had been regularly resorted to by the Radicals for several years, and, at worst, the Democrats opposed them with their own weapons. The election machinery, the courts and every department of the government being in the hands of the Radicals, the Democrats were manifestly powerless to compel a fair election. Even some Southern orators, in their eagerness to emphasize the inevitableness of the supremacy of the whites in the South, neglect to point out that the Reconstruction governments blazed the way for the Democrats to employ wrongful expedients and practically compelled it, with the alternative of forever turning the left cheek when the right was smitten. In the absence of suffrage restrictions at the time, the negro voters were in a heavy majority, but in their ignorance, and under leadership entirely depraved, they were not in the habit of relying upon it, with the result that they created the opportunity of the white minority, stronger in courage and greater in intelligence, to overcome them without violating the rules by which they were themselves playing the game. In a spirit of vulgar boastfulness Southern speakers have actually steered sometimes towards the conclusion that there was nothing in the election methods of the carpetbaggers and scalawags to excuse the means adopted by the Democrats, and that the Democrats must rest their case solely on the assertion of the natural right of the superior race to rule. The truth of the latter proposition is not assailed when it is said that the Democratic campaign of 1876 in South Carolina would have been amply justified without any reference to it and on the ancient ground that it is legitimate to fight the devil with fire.